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Atari Online News, Etc.
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->From the Editor’s Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"

Things at work are still at a hectic level, but the stress has slightly subsided. Even though the new fiscal year for us begins next week, the budget is still a critical (and unfinished) matter. Healthcare is apparently one of those "industries" in which our good economy doesn’t appear to affect positively. Forget "business" as the medical field will never be hurting for lack of patients. It’s the insurance companies and reimbursement practices that’s the problem. One way or another, we always seem to be dependant on the insurance companies for something; they dominate our lives at one point or another.

Around New England, the weather has quickly resorted to the season. I think that summer is past, for what there was of it, and the cool weather is here. Personally, I like this weather, with temperatures in the 60’s and 70’s during the day. I may even order some more loam to attempt to finish what I started this past spring and lay down some more lawn where I need it. Once the leaves turn and fall, I’ll never get another chance before spring again! I can’t believe September is almost over already! I keep wondering and asking: where does the time go?!

Until next time...

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FlexTrax v0.9 Soundtracker Released

Version 0.9 of FlexTrax, a soundtracker for Atari Falcon030 compatible computers has been released.

Version 0.9 has support for both the AVR and WAV sample formats and the sample editor has been greatly improved. FlexTrax supports the standard MOD file format (up to eight channels) for compatibility reasons but also features a new enhanced module format FLX. The FLX format is an extended version of the standard MOD file format with support for real-time sound effects like reverb and delay.

http://home.swipnet.se/newbeat/

STiK2 TCP/IP Stack Released

STiK2 and its source have been released under GPL.

It can be found at http://www.netset.com/~baldrick/stik2.html

STiK2 is the successor to STiK. Over several years a lot of programmers have worked on it and many changes have been made. I personally finally found the time to get the GPL notification added to the source. STiK2 has been tested under the major OSes Aeses and emulators for the Atari.

For more information go to the STiK2 page.

Baldrick
aka Dan Ackerman

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING

compiled by Joe Mirando
jmirando@portone.com

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. First off, let me apologize for missing last week’s edition. I did have a good reason, but it still annoys me that I missed an issue. From the time when Dana and I were setting down what this magazine should be I promised myself that, come hell or high water, I’d have at least this column in EVERY issue. Unfortunately I didn’t say "come hell, high water, or root canals".

You probably remember that I like the show "The West Wing" a lot. Well last week I sounded a lot like "CJ" on The West Wing... "I had a woot canaw". I guess all that’s left now is for me to "bweef the pwesident". <grin>

Actually, the root canal itself wasn’t a problem. I had a root canal at the tender age of 11, so I knew what to expect. It’s pretty much like having a tooth filled... only there’s none of that annoying tenderness afterwards because the nerve in the tooth is gone. Anesthetics are wonderful things and the procedure itself was a breeze. It’s the damage done before the root canal that knocked me for a loop. Take my word for it folks, when confronted with a overwhelming need for a root canal, do NOT hesitate. This is one of the few times that it’s okay in my book to be like the yuppies on that sneaker commercial... JUST DO IT! <grin>

On the Atari front, Fuji Linux is closer to release, there’s a new version of STiK available, and there are two peripherals just down the road coming from Mario Becroft. Not bad for a computer platform that’s been "dead" by industry standards for years, huh?

Well, let’s get to the news, hints, tips, and info from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup

Tim Conrardy asks about exporting from Calamus:

"I just got Calamus. (I answered that post a while back on that guy in

Sunnyvale, CA, USA who was giving away his Atari stuff. Calamus was part of the package along with 4 monitors, a laser printer and a mega 2 and STf!)

I was wondering if there was a way to EXPORT a Calamus Document to either HTML or RTF/Word Format.???

The reason being is that I would like to have the TRACKMAN DOCS available for those that do not have Calamus, as they are available only in Calamus format."

Edward Baiz tells Tim:

"In Calamus 2000 I can export out in regular ASCII text."

Ken Springer adds:

"Calamus has lots of export features, but I don't think either one of these is possible. Go to http://www.calamus.net/us/forum/ and post the question. Ulf or someone more knowledgeable than me will probably reply."

Frank Eiche asks about emulating an ST:

"Does anyone know a good atari st emulator, that needs no hardware parts (gemulator board or something like that)?"

Our old friend Simon Osborne tells Frank:

"If you want good GEM emulation, then you can use either Gemulator 2000, TOSBox or STEmulator. If you want to play ST games, then use WinSTon v0.5 as it is quite simply the best ST games emulator.

Unfortunately, development of WinSTon stopped because of some little toe-rag hacking into the authors PC to steal the source code, among other things.

And look out for SainT in December if you like ST demos."

Frank tells Simon:

"Thanks for all the tips! I found everything I needed, I will have to try the several emulators I found. As far as I've seen, they do their job quite well."

Jose Olivera adds:

"You can download several good emulators from the Little Green Desktop site. The URL is:

http://lgd.fatal-design.com/

I recommend WinSTon. Please note that some of the emulators might require you to have a TOS ROM image. The site above also has them but you should only download the ROM images if you actually have an actual TOS as part of your Atari ST. The latest version of WinSTon (version 0.4) has a version of TOS built in."

John Garone posts:

"My VGA monitor died (boo hoo!) Is an SVGA compatible with the Falcon?"

Richard, "Heart of Dumbala", tells John:

"Yep, any SVGA monitor will work fine with the Falcon. You may need the Falc-VGA adaptor if you are not already using this to connect up."

Tony Cianfaglione asks for help with an interesting problem on his Falcon:

"I set up NVDI on my Falcon and selected prx-->prg in auto. Now the Falcon stops dead in mid-boot with 'can't find monochrome screen driver' STOP...

Now I can't boot the Falcon to get to the auto folder so I can disable NVDI until I get everything working correctly. IS there a bypass to boot from a:\ instead? It keeps defaulting to the hd instead and then locks up."

Mark Bedingfield tells Tony:

"I had a look through my database of old doc's, the fix is quite simple, replace the assign.sys file."

Jim Logan adds:

"Try holding down Alt or Cntrl while it is booting. You might then need to install C before opening it."

Tony replies:

"To answer my own question after some experimenting, hold down the Shift and Control keys to boot into LowRes and it gives you access to your hard drive. Thanks to anyone who might have been considering writing with a solution."

Ken Kosut asks for help with floppy access:

"I am having problems accessing floppy A or B: The message reads: Data on the disk may be damaged, or the disk is write protected. There is nothing on the disk, and it is not write protected. I cannot format a new one either.

When I view the disk structure of A through Diamond Edge, I get an error message, DOS -14 boot sector not recognized. (It won't access the drive) All other hard drive partitions work fine.

Is my floppy drive bad, or did I mess something up internally?"

Steve Stupple tells Ken:

"The power lines are pretty much standard, the schugart interface (the data lead thing) won't do any damage if plugged in the wrong way.

All the odd pins are grounded so if plugged upside down the motor will be constantly on, and the computer will not detect the drive.

The only problem may be if the STF drive is single sided and if the other drive is double sided you aren't going to be able to access double sided format disks!"

Kenneth Medin adds his own experiences:

"Also worth noting:
On my TT I get the same behaviour if I boot with the SLM605 laser turned off. Hard disk is still accessible, though. When I turn the laser on (without rebooting!) suddenly drive A can be read again."

Steve Stupple adds:

"I think it's safe to say that the drive has deceased! hang on a moment though...

Have you cleaned the drive heads, I know this may sound silly but I have come across drives that suddenly pack up due to the heads getting dirty.

The heads are quite easy to do, remove the drive and it's metal cover, using a cotton wool bud (those things you clean babies parts with) with some cleaning agent (I use after shave as this is alcohol based) carefully clean the heads.

You should notice the buds will get e little dingy. Use a dry clean bud to make sure the head is dry.

CAUTION: don't have the bud dripping as the electronic components won't like it very much.

I also like to leave the drive 10-15 mins to allow any solution that I've missed to evaporate before use."

Okay folks, here's the announcement we've all been waiting for... Dan Ackerman posts:

"STiK2 finally released... only 3 years after the initial rumours

STiK2 and it's sources have been released under GPL and can be found at http://www.netset.com/~baldrick/stik2.html

It has been tested under the major OS's, Aes's and clones.

For more information see the STiK2 page.

Dan Ackerman
aka baldrick

ps. I thought I could at least get this out to thank people for the support they have shown me."

Jeff Armstrong tells Dan:

"I just installed STiK2 and I must say that I'm very impressed! I am currently running AES4.1 on top of FreeMiNT 1.15.5 and it works like a dream!

I have attempted to use STiNG and MiNTNet on my system before. STiNG just hated MultiTOS, especially the Dialer. And the configuration was very difficult and never quite worked. MiNTNet was impossible to configure. I never once got MiNTNet to do anything at all. I worked on it for weeks and it never once connected. Now I should state here that I have little network experience. I really don't know exactly what I'm doing.

But Stik2 I had running about 20 minutes after download. One single file controls the entire configuration. and it was simple to set up.

Also, the dialer, Qdialer, is a phenomenal program. It's small and very useful and reports my IP address (my favorite feature).

Furthermore, everything runs like a dream under MultiTOS!

I must recommend this program to everyone! STiK2 is a great and very stable program. So far, it has worked with NEWsie, aMail, aFTP, and CAB1.5 with the '030 and '000 binaries and overlays on my system! I'm definitely sticking with STiK2!

(Just wanted to say that this is my first post ever from my TT! I'm very excited!)"

Well folks, that's it for this week. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - PlayStation2 Delayed! Austin Powers!
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""   Ms. PacMan! X-Men! NHL 2001!
                                     'Destruction Derby Raw'! 'MTV Sports'!
                                     And much more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News   - The Latest Gaming News!
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

Sony PlayStation 2 Delayed

Sony will deliver only half the number of PlayStation 2 video game consoles it originally estimated at its U.S. debut next month, but says it should catch up on shipments by Christmas.

Sony said Wednesday it can only ship 500,000 consoles by its North America debut on Oct. 26, instead of the 1 million units initially projected.

The company blames production delays stemming from a component shortage. It said the initial shipment will be followed by 100,000 units per week until year's end.

Sony said the modified schedule will not affect availability of PlayStation 2 during the holiday season, anticipating there will be about 1.3 million

units in supply.

‘‘We will be able to supply a flow of products, instead of a huge initial spike," said Kaz Hirai, chief operating officer.

It is expected to be the year’s hottest holiday item.

Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. also said Wednesday that it would still meet its target of shipping 10 million units of the game worldwide, including 3 million to North America, by March 2001.

In March, when PlayStation 2 was first released in Japan, the company had a similar problem, delaying shipment of 260,000 units because of a shortage of computer hardware.

Thousands of people lined up outside stores in Tokyo the day before the game machines went on sale and, at most shops, the PlayStation 2 sold out within an hour.

Sony is counting heavily on the sleek, black console to give it a boost in its war against Japanese rivals Sega Enterprises, which makes the Dreamcast console, and Nintendo, maker of the N64 console and the portable Game Boy.

PlayStation 2, the successor to the 5-year-old PlayStation, has vivid graphics, an ability to connect to the Internet and can play DVD movies and compact discs. It will cost about $300.

The company is expected to launch PlayStation 2 in Europe on Nov. 24.

Ms. Pac-Man Makes 3D Debut as Star of "Ms. Pac-Man Maze Madness"

A year after Pac-Man’s three-dimensional return, Namco Hometek announced Ms. Pac-Man’s new lead role in the outrageously fun, 3D action maze game, ‘‘Ms. Pac-Man Maze Madness," available now for the PlayStation game console, and this holiday season for Nintendo 64 and Sega Dreamcast.

Namco’s latest Ms. Pac-Man title offers the original arcade version for the nostalgic at heart, while its enhanced environments and challenging puzzles will capture a new generation of Ms. Pac-Man fans.

With more than 180 mazes and a myriad of puzzles, ‘‘Ms. Pac-Man Maze Madness" offers endless exciting gameplay. Players can enjoy the game solo, ‘‘chilling" to its hypnotic grooves and mesmerizing state-of-the-art 3D graphics.

In multiplayer mode, ‘‘Maze Madness" pumps up the volume by allowing up to four players to engage in a variety of games, including Ghost Tag, where one player is Ms. Pac-Man feasting on dots, while the other players are the ghosts trying to feast on her; and Dot Mania, in which players compete to eat all the dots in a maze.

‘‘It’s fitting that Ms. Pac-Man, who turns 19 this year, has a new game where she exudes her world-famous attitude for fun and proves once again her awesome ability to conquer obstacles to get what she wants," said Mike Fischer, Namco’s director of marketing. ‘‘The exotic and complex environments she travels through in ‘Maze Madness’ are sure to satisfy fans

of the original game and spur a new wave of maze mania."

Remaining true to the original game, no buttons are used in ‘‘Ms. Pac-Man Maze Madness," just directional keys. So that the game offers complex challenges, each level introduces new mechanics such as lava rivers, where Ms. Pac-Man must push ice blocks onto molten lava to save herself; lightning corridors, where she uses lightning switches to divert bolts and avoid being struck; explodable barrels, which allow Ms. Pac-Man to blow up and pass through walls; rev wheels, which allow her to move faster; and popper pads, which propel her to desired locations she can’t get to on foot. In all, more than 30 new mechanics are included.

Ms. Pac-Man journeys through four distinct worlds, facing 15 new enemies -- in addition to a gang of hungry ghosts -- on her path to the Witch’s Castle, where she must defeat her ultimate foe. Not only has the Witch turned the Enchanted Palace into Haunted Halloween, she has kidnapped Professor Pac and a beautiful princess.

In each world, Ms. Pac-Man must collect a virtue gem and several icons to reverse the Witch’s evil spells and gain entrance to another world. A-maze-ing worlds include:

* Cleopactra -- Players must help Ms. Pac-Man avoid spell-casting anubises, sphinxes, snappy alligators and marauding centipedes in her quest to find the Generosity Gem.
* Crystal Caves -- Ms. Pac-Man has to watch out for the Neanderpacs, the legendary Pac-Foot and hungry Saber-Pacs. As she travels further inside the icy caverns, she will encounter deep molten lava rivers which she can cross with the help of ice blocks in her quest for the Truth Gem. Watch out for falling boulders and ice corridors!
* Pac Ping Harbor -- With the ghosts spreading gunpowder everywhere and the fire-breathing dragons ready to set the whole place ablaze, Ms. Pac-Man needs assistance finding the Gem of Wisdom. Avoiding Roman candles, she can use rocket launchers to help clear a path through one of the toughest and most challenging maze areas.
* Haunted Halloween -- This is Ms. Pac-Man’s last chance to store up lives before meeting the Witch. Here she must hunt for the Gem of Courage, fending off Bat Draculas and Frankenpacs who charge their powers on the numerous bolts of lightning. In this nightmarish castle, lightning bolts threaten to destroy Ms. Pac-Man as she avoids evil gargoyles and vicious Hellhounds.

‘‘Ms. Pac-Man Maze Madness" contains 12 stages, four hidden stages, three bonus round mini-games, a BOSS round and a secret BOSS round. Players earn a gold star in every stage in which Ms. Pac-Man consumes all of the pac-dots or all seven juicy pieces of fruit.

Upon defeating the Witch for the first time, players gain a Witch key that opens previously locked areas of the game; gamers earn extra gold stars by completing stages within a certain time limit, or by completing the bonus games. Those who have gathered the required number of gold stars throughout the game can then progress to the first hidden stage.

The more gold stars earned, the more likely one is to get to all four secret stages and advance to the hidden BOSS level. Multiplayer mode contains three different tournament games for up to four players, boasting four maps, four characters, four hidden maps and two secret characters.

Activision Takes Mutant Franchise to the PlayStation2 Computer Entertainment System

Marvel Comic’s super-human mutant heroes will wield their brand of justice on the PlayStation2 computer entertainment system when Activision, Inc. brings the popular franchise to the next-generation console system. The company confirmed today that it is in development on two X-MEN titles for the new platform, a fighting game and an action-RPG. These titles are among the 14 games that Activision has in development for the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system.

The announcement follows Activision’s successful release of X-Men Mutant Academy for the PlayStation game console, which coincided with the opening of Twentieth Century Fox’s ‘‘X-Men: The Movie" in mid-July.

‘‘The success of X-Men Mutant Academy established Activision as a leader in bringing super-hero characters to the console marketplace," states Ron Doornink, President and COO, Activision. ‘‘With the power of the PlayStation 2 and the strength of the X-MEN franchise, Activision will be able to deliver a new dimension to fighting games and launch the series into the popular action-RPG genre."

Take-Two Interactive’s Rockstar Games Ship Two New Austin Powers Games for Nintendo Game Boy Color

Rockstar Games, Take Two Interactive Software, Inc.’s high end video game publishing division ships two new games this week for Nintendo Color Game Boy today based on the wildly popular Austin Powers movie franchise, Austin Powers: Welcome To My Underground Lair and Austin Powers: Oh, Behave.

‘‘We are extremely excited to bring all the signature humor, style, and wit of the Austin Powers characters and film series to Nintendo’s Game Boy Color with Austin Powers: Oh, Behave and Austin Powers: Welcome To My Underground Lair," said Sam Houser, president of Rockstar Games. ‘‘These utterly innovative games deliver all the charm of the Austin Powers franchise and create new and exciting experiences on Game Boy Color."

Austin Powers: Oh, Behave and Austin Powers: Welcome To My Underground Lair are two truly unique Game Boy Color games for swingers and potential secret agents alike. The games very neatly transform Game Boy Color into a fully functional PC, working under either the Austin Powers 2000, and FAB-DOS operating systems or the Dr. Evil 2000 and EVIL-DOS operating systems. Players are sure to have a blast with such hip and happening, fun mini games as Mojo Maze, Evil Mojo, Rock, Paper, Scissors, Domination and He’s ‘Kin Evil. If Game Boy accessories such as the Game Link Cable and the Game Boy Printer are your bag, baby, then you can definitely use them with both games and play games head-to-head and even print out groovy little items!

Mike Myers wrote, produced and starred in Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me, reprising the comic roles that turned the original film into a cultural phenomenon. Since being introduced in May of 1997 the Austin Powers franchise has generated more than $550 million in worldwide box office, television and video sales and rentals. In addition, this week New Line Cinema has shipped more than 10.5 million video and DVD units of Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me to national and local retailers. The home entertainment launch is the largest direct-to-sell-thru video release

this year.

Infogrames Sends the Other White Meat to Stores This Week With Hogs of War for PlayStation

This little piggy went to the market, this little piggy went home, this little piggy had roast beef, and this little piggy went off into the trenches...

Infogrames announced that Hogs of War, the only PlayStation game where pigs are clad in Army uniforms, is shipping to most major retail stores this week. Join the British, French, American, German, Japanese, and Russian armies in a hilarious all-out fight to the finish! What are you waiting for? Chop, chop!

Hog World is at war. Six mighty nations are struggling to overpower each other in the pursuit of territorial and technological gains. Players are thrown into a massive 3D battlefield with an army of three to six maniacal oinkers armed with an arsenal of debilitating weapons. Limited by time, players must quickly use their keen wits and cunning abilities to pummel their opponent before the game automatically switches to the next team, leaving them at the mercy of their adversary.

The game features single- and multi-player modes, allowing gamers to play alone or to execute diabolical moves against their friends. An added bonus to the pork fighting mayhem is a level generator, which enables players to produce an endless number of levels, creating hours and hours of ridiculous pig-battling fun.

‘‘Hogs of War offers solid 3-D turn-based strategy and takes it over the top with off-beat humor and hijinks," said David Riley, marketing director for Infogrames’ Action/Strategy Label. ‘‘It’s no surprise Hogs of War has been the number one PlayStation title in Europe, it’s a game that is not only fun to play but is fun to watch! With the hilarious pig team options, exotic weaponry, and comical on-screen action, Hogs of War has it all!"

Hogs of War also features a comprehensive training level for players to develop their proper pig butt-kicking skills. Once players are up to speed, they are ready to assault their enemies with a huge arsenal of such exotic weaponry as sniper rifles, TNT, and jetpacks. In addition, the enormous 3D playing levels provide the armies plenty of space to roam or hide.

Developed by Infogrames’ Sheffield House, Hogs of War is available at an estimated retail price of $29.99 and can be found at most major retail outlets.

All-New ‘Destruction Derby Raw’ Crashes Onto PlayStation

Midway Games Inc. announced that ‘‘Destruction Derby Raw" for the PlayStation game console is available at retail. The top-selling ‘‘Destruction Derby" franchise has sold more than 3 million lifetime units worldwide, with more than 1 million sold in the U.S.

‘‘Destruction Derby Raw" maintains the heritage of the original

‘‘Destruction Derby" while implementing new features like customizable vehicles, new game modes like the Skyscraper mode and multiplayer games. Crash through 31 tracks with 19 customizable vehicles designed for maximum destruction. An enhanced collision system creates spectacular spins, flips and rolls.

‘‘‘Destruction Derby Raw’ delivers hard-hitting, down-and-dirty, smash-’em-up action fans crave with all-new features, stellar graphics and action-packed gameplay," said Helene Sheeler, vice president of marketing, Midway. ‘‘This version is the best iteration, from the series that started the demolition derby/racing category."

Racers enjoy car-crunching excitement like never before with the following new modes: Skyscraper mode allows racers to shove their opponents off rooftops or get shoved off; Destruction mode allows racers to incinerate their opponents’ cars; Assault mode allows racers to battle it out head-to-head; and Crazy Tracks allows racers to perform death-defying stunts.

‘‘Destruction Derby Raw" Key Features

* Four-player multiplay
* All-new battle modes including Skyscraper mode, which allows racers to shove opponents from rooftops or get shoved off; Destruction mode allows racers to incinerate opponents’ cars; Assault mode allows racers to battle it out head-to-head; and Crazy Tracks allows racers to perform death-defying stunts
* 31 tracks with jumps, crossovers, tunnels, multiple routes and the ‘‘Incredible Squeeze"
* Controls have been altered to react more realistically; the addition of a handbrake control allows gamers to perform spectacular spins
* Full upgrade car options
* New Cash/Car management upgrade system -- gamers can play ‘‘Smash for Cash" mode, earning money to purchase body parts
* Racers can earn extra points by using wrestling-inspired destruction combination moves

3DO Ships World Destruction League: Thunder Tanks For the PlayStation

The 3DO Company announced that it has begun shipping the World Destruction League: Thunder Tanks game for the PlayStation game console, the most intense vehicular combat title of the year, to retail outlets throughout North America and online shopping sites.

Audiences of the future demand more from their entertainment, and it’s up to battle-hungry players to give the masses what they want in an over-the-top televised gladiatorial tournament broadcast on the fictional WDL network that’ll have TV screens exploding with brutal, no-holds-barred tank versus tank mayhem. It’s pro wrestling meets demolition derby as the World Destruction League: Thunder Tanks game brings home all the adrenaline-pumping attitude of heated duels between 9 vicious contenders as they compete in 9 monstrous armored vehicles reflecting their outrageous personalities.

Five international arenas play host to the events, including Italy, Moscow, and the lost continent of Atlantis each with recognizable and destructible

landmarks such as the Leaning Tower of Pisa and the Ginza District of Tokyo. Contestants champing at the bit to unleash their fury can do so using terrifying weapons of mass destruction such as artillery strikes, shock rings, death blossoms and the nano wall, though it'll take more than firepower alone to survive the title's 20 different levels and ultimate campaign play. A pair of boisterous, trash-talking announcers broadcast their commentary as players rumble their way to the top in 5 types of match ups like Deathmatch, Capture the Flag, Frenzy, or Tournament, or take on friends in a lethal, head-to-head, horizontal split-screen confrontation.

Compounding the title's deliciously action-intensive appeal to fans of all ages are its non-stop style of play and instant level of accessibility, thanks to special control settings ranging from ''Driver" for the experienced hooligan to ''Family Mode" for the novice.

EA Ships 10th Anniversary Iteration of NHL Series: NHL 2001

Experience high-flyin', hard hittin', intense powerplay hockey as only Electronic Arts (EA) can do it with NHL 2001 for The PlayStation and PC. Skate for Lord Stanley's Cup with the latest installments of EA SPORTS' widely popular NHL Series containing numerous new features allowing gamers to live the experience.

Lace up the skates and play with or against any of the 30 NHL franchises, including the expansion Columbus Blue Jackets and Minnesota Wild or 20 (18 on PlayStation) of the best International teams. NHL 2001 also offers a variety of game modes to choose from including: Quick Game, Season Play, Career Mode, Playoffs, Shootout and Tournament. All are just a slap shot away.

An exciting new addition to NHL 2001 for the PlayStation is the NHL Challenge. With the NHL Challenge, gamers are able to unlock valuable bonus points by completing tasks on the list of challenges for each level. The higher the level accomplished, the more points received. Bonus points are then used to boost the attributes of created players for skills like speed, shot power, checking and others. Users can track of all challenges accomplished and save them to a memory card, allowing gamers to create a superstar, or a team of superstars, to help them bring home ''The Cup."

Gamers can create their own franchise with the Create-A-Team feature (PC Only). Create-A-Team allows gamers to build a team that is truly their own with customizable team logo, team jersey, city name, as well as players' faces using EA's Face in the Game technology. With Face in the Game, anyone can compete against the NHL's best by following simple instructions that allow game players to take a digitized picture of a face, and place it directly onto their own hockey player.

NHL 2001 for the PC features full online Internet play via EA.COMSM. Here players can match up and compete against opponents around the world with as many as eight players. Chat rooms and match-up servers provide gamers a forum to congratulate opponents on a well-played match or discuss an upcoming contest. In addition, the PC version allows gamers the ability to customize numerous settings to their preference. With the ''Customize Gameplay" option, players use sliders to adjust speed, scoring, checking, shooting, fighting and more.

''From the beginning we set out to create the most fun, immersive, easy to

play and best looking interactive hockey games ever," said Rory Armes executive producer of NHL 2001. ‘‘On the PlayStation side, we are very excited about the new NHL Challenge and think users will have a great deal of fun trying to complete each challenge. On the PC side, playing solo, or against somebody across the world on EA.COM, using their own franchise and custom players with the Create a Team and Face in the Game features will once again be a favorite among our users," Armes went on to add. ‘‘Our hope is that gamers will find NHL 2001 the most interactive and deep hockey game available."

NHL 2001 Cross-Platform Feature Set:

* 10-year Career Mode, where gamers become the General Manager, has been upgraded. As the GM, gamers can trade players or draft picks, retire players, sign free agents, or even draft rookies to replace departed players. Career Mode allows gamers the chance to be the architect of the next great hockey dynasty.
* New to NHL 2001 is a Momentum Meter that fluctuates during the game according to each teams performance on the ice. Scoring key goals and comebacks all increase team moral resulting in better team performance, while the opposite adversely affects the team and decreases momentum.
* Big Shot and Big Hitter icons add to ease of play. These icons, in the shape of a hockey stick blade for Big Shots and a hammer for Big Hitter, allow newcomers the ability to easily identify their goal-hungry snipers and check-happy defenders with a single glance.
* Real player physics and over 900 new motion-capture moves from actual NHL players and new checks performed by Hollywood stuntmen.
* All new artificial intelligence, new camera close-ups, exciting new ways to score such as, cannon shots from the point, and one-footed wristers make NHL 2001 the most intuitive and realistic interactive hockey experience to date.

NHL 2001 is rated ‘‘E" (Everyone). NHL 2001 for the PlayStation will ship September 26, while the PC version will hit shelves September 29. Both are analog controller compatible and support up to eight players. Consumers may purchase the game directly at the EA Store SM (http://www.eastore.ea.com) or by calling EA Direct Sales at 1.877.324.2637. Both titles have a suggested retail price of $39.95.

Infogrames Races Into the Holidays With ‘Moto Racer World Tour’

The thrills and spills of motorcycle racing crashes home for play on the Sony PlayStation game console and PC as Infogrames readies Motor Cross World Tour for release this November.

Developed by Delphine Software, Moto Racer World Tour offers a wide variety of realistic motorcycle racing challenges on tracks across the globe.

‘‘Moto Racer World Tour is one of the most well-known motorcycle game franchises ever introduced and an ideal game for the holidays," said Martin Currie, Director of Marketing for Infogrames. ‘‘What separates Moto Racer World Tour from other games is its unprecedented depth as it is the only game to include all six disciplines of motorcycle racing and should please even the most ardent fans."

Developed by Delphine, Moto Racer World Tour provides one of the most

in-depth and feature-rich games available. In addition to advanced game physics and 3D graphics, Moto Racer World Tour features:

* Six Types of Racing -- such as Speed Racing, Supercross and Motocross, Time Trials, Dragster, Freestyle and Traffic;
* Five Different Modes of Play -- including Practice, Single Race, Time Attack, Arcade Mode, Championship Mode;
* Customized Motorcycles -- players can customize their bike's engine, suspension and transmission;
* Force Feedback Control -- provides players with controller feedback so they can feel all the jolts and jumps.
* Replay Mode -- gives players the ability to watch their entire race from start to finish.

Moto Racer World Tour for the PlayStation game console is shipping in November for a suggested retail price of $49.95, while the PC version is expected to ship in the spring. Additional information can be found on the World Wide Web at www.us.infogrames.com.

THQ Ships "MTV Sports: Pure Ride"

THQ Inc. announced the release of ''MTV Sports: Pure Ride" for the Sony PlayStation game console.

A true free-ride experience, ''MTV Sports: Pure Ride" boasts wide open terrain in locations scattered throughout the world, thousands of trick combinations and a Create-A-Park feature that allows players to actually design their own runs. ''MTV Sports: Pure Ride" is now available at major retail outlets nationwide.

Developed by Radical Entertainment, ''MTV Sports: Pure Ride" will give gamers the freedom they've been longing for in a snowboarding title, without sacrificing a single thrill. Big air, exciting speed and intense competition all help to make this the snowboarding title PlayStation owners have been waiting for.

''Snowboarding is more than just a winter sport," stated Peter Dille, vice president, marketing, THQ. ''It's a lifestyle. From the music to the licensed equipment to the exhilaration of executing any number of incredible tricks, we've captured the very essence of snowboarding with 'MTV Sports: Pure Ride,' and it shows. Initial reaction from the gaming press has been very positive."

''MTV Sports: Pure Ride" sets a new standard for interactive snowboarding experiences by delivering vast open terrain that, for the first time ever in a snowboarding video game, allows players to pick their own lines down the mountain. Players can launch from huge kickers and rails and perform thousands of unique trick combinations in this true free-ride experience.

The Create-A-Park feature gives players the freedom to place rocks, trees, jumps and rails over long open runs on three different mountains. Players will ride boards licensed from MLY, M3, Sims, Salomon and more, through Canada, France, Japan, South America, Sweden and the United States.

All of this is set to the sounds of hot, up-and-coming bands ranging from hardcore to hip-hop. Additionally, the game's professional riders will boast the unique tricks and styling that have made them top competitors in

one of the fastest-growing sports in the country.

Snowboarding has quickly become one of the biggest individual sports in the country with more than 100 percent growth in the past three years. In 1999 alone, there were more than 6 million snowboarders nationwide, with roughly 80 percent under the age of 24.

‘‘MTV Sports: Pure Ride" is also scheduled for release on Game Boy Color in November of this year.

THQ Ships ‘‘Power Rangers Lightspeed Rescue" for PlayStation and Nintendo 64

THQ Inc. and Saban Entertainment Inc. announced the release of ‘‘Power Rangers Lightspeed Rescue" for Sony PlayStation and Nintendo 64.

Powered by one of the strongest kids’ television and action figure properties, ‘‘Power Rangers Lightspeed Rescue" will challenge kids to save the world from evil monsters and natural disaster. These action adventure games are now available at major retail outlets nationwide.

‘‘We are thrilled with the ongoing success of ‘Power Rangers Lightspeed Rescue’ for Game Boy Color, which hit retail in June of this year," stated Alison Locke, executive vice president of North American Publishing, THQ. ‘‘Now kids will have an exciting opportunity to assume the role of their favorite ‘Power Rangers’ hero on PlayStation and Nintendo 64."

‘‘We are delighted to be releasing more ‘Power Rangers Lightspeed Rescue’ video games with THQ," said Elie Dekel, president, Saban consumer products. ‘‘It’s terrific to see retail demand steer the already successful ‘Power Rangers’ brand into the growing kids console arena."

In ‘‘Power Rangers Lightspeed Rescue," kids can play as their favorite ‘‘Power Ranger" hero as members of the elite ‘‘Power Rangers Lightspeed Rescue" team. The game will include authentic music, sound effects and actual voice over from the actors in the ‘‘Power Rangers" television series.

Through multiple environments, including hidden bonus levels, players will battle to save the world from evil monsters and natural disasters. Both games feature single- or two-player mode, giving gamers the opportunity to play as their favorite Ranger and favorite Megazord as they battle creatures from the ‘‘Power Rangers" television series. In-game story sequences provide a completely immersive gameplay experience.

For more information on ‘‘Power Rangers Lightspeed Rescue" for the PlayStation and Nintendo 64 game console and the rest of THQ’s 2000 line-up, visit www.thq.com.

THQ Ships "Disney’s The Little Mermaid II" for PlayStation

THQ Inc. and Disney Interactive Monday announced the release of ‘‘Disney’s The Little Mermaid II" for the PlayStation game console.

The game combines the stories of both ‘‘Disney’s The Little Mermaid" and ‘‘The Little Mermaid II: Return to the Sea" movies in addition to featuring more than 30 minutes of movie footage. Joining original characters Ariel, Flounder, Ursula, Sebastian and Triton are newly introduced Melody, Ariel’s daughter, and Morgana, Ursula’s evil sister. This land and sea adventure is now available at major retail outlets throughout the United States and Canada.

In ‘‘Disney’s The Little Mermaid II" for PlayStation, players can assume the role of either Ariel or Melody. With 15 3-D underwater and land-based levels and tons of secret areas to explore, gamers will have the opportunity to solve puzzles, collect treasures, avoid enemies and interact with friends. Players will find bonus mini-games throughout, such as ‘‘Sebastian’s Orchestra." Authentic music, footage, original character voices and sound effects from ‘‘Disney’s The Little Mermaid" feature film and ‘‘Disney’s The Little Mermaid II: Return to the Sea" direct-to-video release are also featured in the game.

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->A-ONE Gaming Online - Online Users Growl & Purr!
"""""""""""""""""""""

New Lynx and Jaguar items!

CHAMPIONSHIP RALLY COMING SOON FOR THE LYNX

If you’re hungry for a multiplayer overhead racer for the Lynx, with tons of tracks and player options, check out Championship Rally coming this Christmas from Songbird! The web site was recently updated with the latest screen shots, and the game is currently in final beta test.

EXPERIENCE RAPID FIRE ON THE JAGUAR

Songbird has a limited supply of Rapid Fire Controllers for the Jaguar available for $39.95 each. These awesome modified controllers breathe new life into games like Raiden and Zero 5!

YOU MUST PROTECT THE REMNANT

Take on the role of the last fighter pilot fending off waves of alien invaders in this instant classic for the Lynx! Incredible 3D scaling and big explosions make this game a must-have for Lynx fans. Available now, $39.95.

DIGGING FOR GOLD

Crystal Mines II will never be the same! Get CM2: Buried Treasure today, and start designing and downloading new levels to your Lynx. Features over 50 brand new levels, plus all the original levels viewable in the included editor. (Lynx/PC serial cable also required, not included). Available now, $29.95.

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS...

Songbird is always pursuing more Lynx and Jaguar titles. Expect more releases well into 2001, and as always, stay tuned to http://songbird.atari.net for all the latest on Songbird Productions and the Jaguar and Lynx!

And be sure to pick up the October issues of GameFan and Next Generation, for great coverage of new Jaguar products and CGE2K, respectively.

Sincerely,

Carl Forhan
Songbird Productions
http://songbird.atari.net

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

California Governor Vetoes Internet Sales Tax Bill

California Gov. Gray Davis vetoed an Internet tax bill on Monday that sought to require retailers with stores in the state to collect taxes for online sales, saying he did not want to stifle e-commerce.

But the Democrat, who said policy makers still needed to review the matter, signed two other measures to create a commission to examine sales tax issues in ''the New Economy" and another calling for a three-year moratorium on Internet access taxes.

''Imposing sales taxes on Internet transactions at this point in its young life would send the wrong signal about California's international role as the incubator of the dot-com community," Davis said in announcing his veto.

The veto of the sales tax bill, which supporters in the nation's most populous state said merely clarified state law regarding the taxation of Internet purchases, comes as lawmakers across the country grapple with similar issues regarding online sales.

The measure would have raked in an estimated $14 million a year for a state whose economic good times have been largely fueled by high-tech. But foes worried the bill would have burdened out-of-state business and harmed the state's Internet-friendly reputation.

The legislation would have precluded taxing the sales of companies with no brick and mortar stores or warehouses in the state. But for firms that did have stores or warehouses in California, some sort of tax would have applied.

The measure would have affected businesses like book retailers Borders Group Inc. and Barnes & Noble Inc., which currently do not charge online customers sales tax in California.

Appeals Court Acts Swiftly on Microsoft, Sets Date

The U.S. Court of Appeals acted swiftly to take control of the Microsoft antitrust appeal Tuesday, ordering the two sides to propose schedules for the appeals process by Oct. 2.

The court said it wanted ‘‘a proposed briefing schedule and format by 4 p.m. on Monday, Oct. 2." It said that if the two sides disagreed, replies could be filed on Oct. 5 and further replies on Oct. 10.

But the appeals court suggested the two sides get together and work out a schedule, as they have at times in the past: "The parties may, if practicable, submit a joint proposal."

The appeals court acted within hours of getting the case back from the Supreme Court, which decided that the Court of Appeals -- which is a lower court -- should hear it before the Supreme Court considers the matter.

Microsoft is appealing a trial court decision which found it violated antitrust law and should be split in two.

Apple Shocks With Earnings Warning

The fairy tale turnaround may be over. Apple sees slowing in all of its geographies and slower-than-expected sales of G4 cube. Stock price plummets.

Apple Computer Inc. became the latest big-name technology firm to warn of disappointing sales and earnings in its fourth quarter Thursday. The PC maker said it will miss analysts’ estimate by 12 cents to 15 cents a share in the quarter.

Apple shares fell 46 percent in after-hours trading following the company’s earnings warning. According to Island ECN, Apple’s shares recently were down $25, or 46 percent, to $29. The shares had been halted on release of the news, Dow Jones News Service reported.

Apple officials said it will report sales of between $1.85 billion to $1.9 billion, just slightly better than $1.83 billion it recorded in what most analysts considered a disappointing third quarter.

Apple now expects earning to fall between 30 cents to 33 cents a share in the quarter, well below the First Call Corp. consensus estimate of 45 cents a share.

Apple blamed slow sales of its Power Mac G4 cube PCs as well as sluggish sales in all geographies and in its education business.

Its shares closed up $4.56 to $53.50 ahead of the warning.

"We've clearly hit a speedbump, which will result in our earning, before investment gains, approximately $110 million rather than the expected $165 million for the September quarter," said CEO Steve Jobs in a prepared release. "Though this slowdown is disappointing, we have so many wonderful new products and programs in the pipeline -- including Mac OS X early next year -- and remain positive about our future."

Sanford Bernstein analyst Vadim Zlotnikov said he wouldn't characterize the fourth-quarter profit warning as a "speedbump," pointing out that Apple's recently battled through two or three major upgrade cycles for its popular powerbook and iMac machines.

"Overall consumer demand doesn't appear to be as low as Apple's numbers indicate," Zlotnikov said. "It looks like sales of its G4 cubes haven't taken off they way they expected. At least so far."

Apple's string of impressive quarterly earnings reports came to halt last quarter when it managed to top the Street's profit estimate but fell short of revenue targets.

In the quarter, it earned $200 million, or 55 cents a share, on sales of $1.83 billion.

"I have a great deal of admiration for what Apple has accomplished lately, but they can't keep constantly redefining themselves," Zlotnikov said. "Every time Apple stumbles it hurts a bit more because they define their own market."

Tim Bajarin, industry analyst with Creative Strategies in San Jose, Calif., predicted better things for Apple as it enters the holiday season.

"I still expect them to be pretty strong with sales of the iMac in Q4," he said. "Cube sales may continue to be an issue into Q4, but consumer sales going into Christmas should make the next quarter pretty strong anyway.

The holiday season "is always one of their better quarters," Bajarin said. "Keep in mind that they've introduced a whole slew of new products. Sounds like this [quarter] was a bit of a blip. The next one at least should be better for them."

Apple shares moved up to a 52-week high of $75.19 in March after falling to a low of $28.69 last September.

Seventeen of the 19 analysts following the stock rate it either a "buy" or "strong buy."

AOL Takes Heat on Instant Messaging

The Internet's two leading instant messaging services, both owned and run by America Online, Inc. and used by tens of millions, have taken at least a nominal step toward compatibility.

Users of AOL's ICQ instant messaging service can now access that network by entering their password into AOL's AIM instant messenger - as long as the ICQ user also has a recent version of AIM's software.

Competitors whose users have been consistently shut out by AOL contend the new feature heralds eventual interoperability, though it doesn’t allow ICQ subscribers to chat with AIM subscribers, or vice versa.

AOL says the feature is merely a byproduct of some testing. It allows ICQ users - 73 million are registered - to use an AIM interface, or messaging screen, if they choose. There are 66 million registered AIM users. The next closest competitor, Microsoft’s MSN, has about 18 million users.

The change is of virtually no practical use to any normal instant-messaging user.

But AOL competitors say it shows the online giant is positioning itself to maintain market dominance, something that has concerned federal antitrust regulators reviewing AOL’s proposed acquisition of Time Warner Inc.

‘‘What it means is that there is not a fundamental technical problem to achieving interoperability," said Margaret Heffernan, president of iCast, a Woburn, Mass.-based instant message provider with about 500,000 users. ‘‘It’s simply a business decision to keep us (and other competitors) out."

‘‘This seems to be the proof that the security and privacy concerns that AOL talks about are just a smoke screen," said Alexander Diamandis, vice president of marketing for New York-based Odigo, which has 1.6 million customers.

AOL spokeswoman Tricia Primrose said the feature under scrutiny was research-related and had nothing to do with making the two systems compatible.

She said Chantilly-based AOL has been working with an industry task force that is developing technical standards to allow interoperability - standards she said are about a year away.

Primrose also said AOL would not make its two services compatible ahead of competitors.

In practical terms, AOL’s competitors offer more compatibility with AOL’s two services than each has with the other.

Heffernan said iCast users have had access to the AOL networks about 50 percent of the time since March.

Programmers from iCast, Odigo and several other competitors constantly find ways around AOL’s firewalls, only to have AOL develop new countermeasures.

Diamandis said Odigo has been on the winning end of its cat-and-mouse game with AOL for the last week. The two sides have wrested control from each other 20 times in the last few months, he said.

AOL’s Primrose said iCast’s and Odigo’s efforts are nothing but illegal hacking.

MSN Turns Users Into Spammers

A change of address notification for new users generates MSN Explorer endorsements to colleagues and friends. Make that former friends.

Users of the MSN Explorer beta may inadvertently be sending their friends seemingly personal e-mail gushing praise over the new Microsoft program.

The catch is, the spam was written by Microsoft and attached to change-of-address e-mails sent by some users who have signed up for MSN Explorer.

Users can opt out of the message, but many have not been aware of the problem.

"I recently began using a new product from Microsoft called MSN Explorer," the message begins. "With MSN Explorer, you can send and receive e-mail, exchange instant messages with me and the millions of other people who use MSN Explorer, browse the Web and much more. MSN Explorer even offers an exciting new look for using the Web and makes it easy to find and play music online. Want to try it out? It’s FREE! Just click on the link below and follow the download instructions." The letter is generated by the beta-version of Microsoft Network’s Explorer, according to Woody’s Office Watch.

Three innocent clicks -- or three presses of the Return key -- turn Explorer users into spammers.

It works like this: During installation, the MSN Explorer setup program asks whether users would like to import their Outlook address book. Next, users who press the "return" key are asked if they would like to notify the people in their address book of a change in e-mail.

For users who select "yes," the set-up program creates an e-mail with the line: "I am writing to let you know that I have a new e-mail address: "(new e-mail)." The short message is followed by the endorsement. Clicking "send" results in the e-mail going out to every one listed in the user’s Outlook address book.

A Microsoft spokesperson confirmed the ads were being sent out and that users could not edit the wording. It’s not automatic, by any means, but many users trying the beta have inadvertently sent the messages to others.

Several users of the beta software have complained to Microsoft in a public forum, requesting that the company pull the ad-based e-mail before the software goes gold.

Recipients of the e-mail pitchers aren’t happy either.

But, in one reply to an angry customer who received the e-mail, Hotmail -- a Microsoft subsidiary -- denied that the message was spam.

"The e-mail you received was an invitation from MSN Explorer, sent on behalf of an existing user who changed their e-mail address and wants you to try MSN Explorer," said Microsoft customer support in a letter that appeared to be an official statement.

Nevertheless, even Hotmail may be ready to pull the plug on such messages in the future.

"We have been in discussion with the MSN Explorer Team about these invitations," the letter continued. "And they are considering revising them so as not to confuse users."

Microsoft Terms Sting Small Shops

While large enterprises are freed from reimaging license fees, small businesses aren’t

Angry Microsoft Corp. customers have forced the company to relax the terms of its OEM Windows license for enterprise users, but many small- business customers aren’t so lucky.

Microsoft this month backed down on its long-standing insistence that enterprise users cannot reimage, or copy, their workstations under the terms of the OEM Windows license that comes preinstalled on their hardware.

Many small Windows shops are still being penalized by the licensing provisions that remain in place, however. This means that small businesses that acquire desktops from an OEM with a version of Windows preinstalled may not use an imaging tool to duplicate a company-specific configuration on other machines without buying an additional upgrade license.

Microsoft did not enforce this little-known volume license condition-which has applied to all Windows systems since 1993-until earlier this year, when it stated that the reimaging of Windows workstations by any customer was an advanced operating system usage right not allowed under the OEM Windows license. The Redmond, Wash., company had insisted that these users buy an upgrade license, which costs $96 to $171 per workstation, if they want to reimage. That attitude left many users fuming.

"We have received numerous complaints from customers over the past two months about the fact that they were unable to use the OEM-licensed copy of Windows to reimage their other workstations. We actively encouraged them to complain to Microsoft, which they did," said Michael Silver, an analyst with Gartner Group Inc., in Stamford, Conn.

Such user pressure forced Microsoft to backpedal until it decided that customers with a Select License or an Enterprise Agreement would be allowed to reimage workstations without having to buy an upgrade license. But while the move lets larger corporations off the hook-those with 500 or more seats typically have Select License or Enterprise Agreements with Microsoft-it leaves smaller businesses that have a standard Open License vulnerable to be cited for violations.

Outback Steakhouse Inc., of Tampa, Fla., is one such user. The restaurant chain has some 35,000 employees but fewer than 1,000 desktops and has no Select License or Enterprise Agreement with Microsoft. Robert Sunderland, Outback’s senior system administrator, said Microsoft "harassed" Outback for license noncompliance and attempted to pressure him into buying a license upgrade.

Sunderland also claims he’s been harassed by a third party working for Microsoft and received numerous letters insisting he get his licenses in order.

"Microsoft’s sales staff paid me a courtesy visit and then proceeded to tell me that I had to buy an upgrade license if I wanted to reimage. When I complained, they told me there was nothing they could do. They are using scare tactics to make people like me run around and buy licenses we don’t

need," he said.

Because Outback has a large number of restaurants across the country, it makes sense for it to ghost disk images from one computer to another. Ghosting takes less than half an hour, whereas reconfiguring each system individually takes up to 4 hours, Sunderland said.

Simon Hughes, a program manager in Microsoft's business licensing group, admitted that the company has received complaints from its enterprise clients about this licensing restriction. After considering all the technical and legal implications, Microsoft decided to amend the agreement.

Hughes said, however, that Microsoft has not received complaints from smaller users working under the Open License. While he conceded that allowing larger clients usage rights that were denied to smaller customers could be perceived as unfair, he countered that there are other technical, legal and practical issues that come into play for these users.

"We are aware of the concerns relating to the use of the OEM license by our open-agreement customers, and we are looking at potential solutions," he said.

Napster In Court to Plead for Future

The music-sharing site and its millions of users are fighting an order to shut down. A court will take up the case Monday.

Napster Inc. heads back to court Monday to plead for its life before a panel of appeals court judges.

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals is in the process of deciding whether to uphold a lower court ruling that would shut down the controversial file-swapping site.

Monday morning attorneys from both Napster and the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), which is suing the company, will get about 20 minutes to present oral arguments to the panel, followed by rebuttals and a chance to answer the judges' questions.

The panel can rule anytime after that. Traditionally, judges take anywhere from a few days to a few months to issue rulings.

The RIAA -- which represents music labels including Warner Music Group, Sony Music Group and Universal Music Group -- sued Napster in December, alleging the company promotes illegal activity by allowing people to swap copyrighted music for free.

The 9th Circuit has already given Napster a temporary reprieve. During a hearing in July, U.S. District Judge Marilyn Hall Patel issued a surprise ruling from the bench, ordering the company to stop the swapping of major-label music, a move that in effect would shut the site down.

But just hours before Patel's ruling was set to take effect, a two-judge appeals court panel delayed it. They said the case raises new questions about topics such as fair use in the digital age, and gave each side a chance to argue their case.

Attorneys for both sides already have submitted paper filings to the appeals court, and now they'll have a chance to present their positions in person.

In its filings, Napster has argued that it doesn't have the ability to differentiate major label songs from other musical pieces, and would only be able to comply with the ruling by closing the site, a move that would lead to job cuts.

Furthermore, throughout the case, the company has argued that people have a right to use a service such as Napster under the same legal concepts that allow you to tape programs on a VCR or make multiple copies of a music CD for personal use.

Napster also has the support of a wide range of groups that include doctors, librarians and consumer electronics makers. In a flurry of legal filings with the 9th Circuit in recent weeks, the groups argued that the anti-Napster ruling could quash new technology or threaten free speech.

Meanwhile the RIAA has made the same arguments that worked so successfully in Patel's courtroom -- namely, that Napster aims to make money by promoting the stealing of copyrighted work. The RIAA has had the support of software makers, the U.S. Patent Office and even the National Basketball Association.

Monday's hearing comes while major shifts are taking place in the online music arena, as copyright holders seek to maintain control over the distribution of music, and new technology companies experiment with innovative ways to transmit music online.

Some of the new technology companies are biting the bullet and pairing with traditional record labels.

Napster competitor Aimster reportedly is in talks with RIAA member EMI Group plc to develop a file-sharing concept amenable to copyright holders.

Meanwhile, MP3.com, a music locker company that was forced to pay millions after losing a huge legal dispute with Universal, is asking federal lawmakers for help.

Some Congressmen have introduced a bill that would basically legalize MP3.com's MyMP3 service -- which is at the heart of the Universal dispute -- by letting people store and access digital copies of songs they already own on CD. MP3.com has organized a "Million E-Mail March" to support the bill.

And at least one company has buckled under the threat of a music industry suit. Scour Inc., which has a service allowing the swapping of music, video and other files, laid off most of its staff in August, saying an RIAA suit similar to the Napster litigation has scared off investors.

New Sony Device Puts Net And TV in Your Hand

Ever wanted to trade stocks and watch TV while sitting on the toilet?

Then Sony Corp's latest wireless gadget could be for you.

The Japanese high-tech giant on Thursday launched a portable screen that can be used to surf the Internet, send e-mails and watch TV, billing it as the digital era’s answer to its revolutionary Walkman personal stereo. The Airboard, a sleek, lightweight 10.4 inch (26 cm) monitor that comes with a base station to receive information, enables users to roam around the house and as far as the garden while staying connected and entertained.

Trading stocks while visiting the bathroom was listed as one of the Airboard’s possible uses, as well as browsing the Net or watching a video while cooking dinner.

‘‘There has been nothing like this in the world," Shizuo Takashino, a director in charge of Sony’s home electronics division, told a news conference.

‘‘Without using a PC, users can access information from anywhere, effectively solving the so-called digital-divide problem."

The ‘‘digital divide" refers to the gap between those who have access to Web and those who can’t afford to. However, with a likely price tag of around 120,000 yen ($1,100), the machine is not much cheaper than a basic laptop computer.

‘‘Like the Walkman, this device will create a new lifestyle," Takashino added, describing the Airboard as a "personal IT television."

The Airboard, which will go on sale in Japan on December 1, avoids the need for a keyboard by incorporating a touchpad in the screen.

By allowing simultaneous display of different content, users can watch a movie while keeping in touch with an e-mail conversation on a sub screen. The Airboard can also hook up with other audio-visual products, acting as a remote control for a CD player, for example.

The launch of the high-tech device came as Sony shares suffered their biggest one-day slide in six months, falling 6.42 percent to close at 10,640. The fall came after Sony announced a halving of its initial roll-out of PlayStation 2 game consoles in North America.

Sony is hoping it will tap into the growing popularity in Japan of devices that offer users Internet access without a personal computer.

Dominant wireless carrier NTT DoCoMo has attracted a massive 12 million subscribers to its ‘‘i-mode" service, which enables users to access thousands of web sites and access e-mail with their mobile phones.

The latest video game machines made by Sony and other leading makers also offer Internet and e-mail access without the costs and complications of computers.

Analysts said the Airboard was Sony’s latest attempt to integrate home audio and visual equipment into a single system, but said it was unclear whether it would be put into mass production.

Yukihiko Shimada, an electronics analyst at Credit Lyonnais Securities, said a more affordable price would suggest that Sony is serious about mass producing the device.

‘‘In many ways this is still a trial product," he said. "Flat-panel

screens are not optimal for televison viewing, mainly because they aren’t bright enough, but that may not matter as people will be looking at the screen from a close distance, like a PC.

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